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Excerpts of Remarks of
THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES [REDACTED]
at the
LINCOLN DAY DINNER
Sponsored by the Republican State Committee of Wisconsin
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
February 8, 1960

An even greater challenge confronts the Republican Party and the nation today than was the case in 1860. The issue in Lincoln's day was freedom for the slaves and the survival of the nation. But the issue today is, literally, freedom for all mankind -- and the survival of civilization.

Lincoln Day dinners are generally occasions for speeches which are primarily devoted to praising the past of our Party. We are justly proud of the 100-year record of our Party and of the magnificent achievements of the seven years of this Administration. But the times call for more than resting our case on the accomplishments of the past. Let us resolve that throughout this year of 1960 we shall direct our major attention to the future of America and how our Party can best serve that future.

Up to this time, the Democratic candidates seem to be engaged in a contest as to who can call the worst names rather than who can provide the best leadership. The issues in 1960 are too important to allow the campaign to degenerate into a name-calling contest. That is why I intend to continue to ignore personal attacks which may be made on me.

This does not mean that we should ignore attacks on our record. I believe that the candidates of the opposition party in a campaign not only have the right but the responsibility to criticize an administration's record wherever they believe it is deficient.

And our record ought to be thoroughly analyzed and thoroughly discussed because it is such an important test of our capacity for future leadership.

But the public interest also requires that we effectively answer attacks on our record wherever we believe they are unjustified. The cliche that "The record speaks for itself" is true only when no one is speaking against it. You can be sure that in this campaign we will not make the mistake of failing to defend our record against those who choose to attack it.

The greatest issue of all -- the one that overrides and cuts across all the others -- is the issue of peace, and of national security as the necessary basis of our quest for peace. We hear these days that America is a second-class, second-rate power.

Let's consider the facts:

The debate on national defense can be constructive. One of the strengths of a free society is that our policies are submitted to constant, searching criticism by those who disagree with them. Criticism can become destructive, however, when by emphasizing alleged weaknesses and overlooking acknowledged strengths it has the effect of making the United States appear to be a "sitting duck" to potential aggressors.

Engaging in a "numbers game" in which we compare the number of missiles, airplanes, submarines or carriers we have with that possessed by our potential opponents is a completely fallacious method of determining whether we have the strength we need. The test of the adequacy of United States military strength is not whether we have as much of each category of weapons as a potential aggressor, but whether overall we have enough strength so that, regardless of how much he may have, he knows he cannot launch an attack which will knock out our retaliatory power and remove the risk of massive destruction to his homeland.

Not only do we have that kind of strength today but we have a program which we believe is adequate to maintain that position in the future. There is no gap in our overall deterrent strength. And what is most important, Mr. Khrushchev knows this to be the case.

But we must not be complacent. Because of new technological developments, we shall continue to re-examine our defense posture on a month-to-month basis. And in doing so, we must always be guided by the fundamental principle that the United States has the will and the resources to maintain whatever military strength is necessary to deter any potential aggressor from launching an attack.

It is particularly gratifying that at a dinner honoring Lincoln's birthday, we can point to more progress in the field of civil rights in this Administration than in any since Lincoln's. And if this Congress adopts the Administration's voting referee proposal, we can effect the first significant breakthrough since the adoption of the 15th Amendment in 1870, in guaranteeing the right to vote to Negro citizens in the southern States.

The struggle for civil rights and for equal opportunity is, of course, first and foremost a matter of moral principle and of simple justice. But it involves, as well, the whole of our struggle for world peace. Nothing is more damaging to the United States in the battle-of-ideas-and-ideals, going on today in the uncommitted world, than our failures and our shortcomings in this area.

When we make progress toward our goal of equality for all at home, we help immeasurably the cause for justice and freedom which we present abroad.

We could make no greater mistake in attempting to meet Mr. Khrushchev's challenge for peaceful competition between our two systems than to lose faith in the economic principles which have been responsible for our progress in the past.

The Communists have found it necessary to abandon many of their basic theories in order to increase the productivity of their economy. There is a greater reward for incentive and for superior achievement in the Soviet Union than in most non-Communist countries today. In other words, they have found it necessary to turn our way. At a time they are turning our way, we must not make the mistake of turning their way.

We must reject the discredited theories of those who insist that the way to get more economic growth is to increase government spending and government control of the economy. The way to greater economic growth in peacetime is not through increasing the size of government but by expanding the opportunities for creative enterprise by millions of individual Americans. While government can and must play a supplemental role in creating the proper climate for economic growth, we must never forget that the primary source of our phenomenal economic progress has been and will continue to be private rather than government enterprise.

And just as important, we must insist that this competition be broadened; it is not enough for us to achieve material prosperity. This is only the basis for a life of cultural and spiritual growth and development for the preservation and extension of the freedoms we cherish far beyond mere comfort and prosperity.

